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Geese on a green wave

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Acknowledgements

The proposal for this study was written on a laptop, in the middle of the night, in a car somewhere in the Lauwersmeer area, together with Julia Stahl. At the time, I was working as a field assistant in the Great Tit project, when Rudi Drent called and asked me to present a proposal to the CEES board within a few days. Julia immediately gave up her night-sleep to help me write the proposal during the nightly measurements; since then we have been partners in this research. Her input in designing the experiments, analysing the data, supervising the students and writing the papers was invaluable, but, most of all, I want to thank her for the great times we had in the lab and in the field: Julia, it has always been a great pleasure to work together with you!

A lot of the work presented in this thesis has been done in cooperation with students from the University of Groningen and other institutes. In spring 2002 some tough men started in the field on Schiermonnikoog, before I was even back from Africa: Ralf Mullers and Jeroen Minderman defied the elements and worked through storms, broken cages and escaped geese, while Mike Wallink (Saxion Hogeschool IJsselland) took up the meticulous task of measuring thousands of plants and undoubtedly had many frozen fingers. In the second year, Geerke Lubbe (Van Hall instituut), Ciska Veen and Reinout Havinga conducted experiments at Schiermonnikoog, Gotland and Tobseda, respectively. All of them helped collecting large amounts of data, which form large parts of chapters 3 and 5, but also made our time in the field very enjoyable. Pieter Coehoorn (Van Hall instituut) did a great job with the foraging trials of the captive geese in Haren, winter 2003, resulting in an already accepted manuscript. In spring 2004, Peter Wolfs and Wouter Pardijs from the Animal ecology course joined field work on Gotland, and did a lot of observations even though they required them to be in the field long before their usual wake-up time. In the last year, Robert Buitenwerf managed to follow the geese from Schiermonnikoog to Gotland to Russia within the same season to measure the effects of droppings on the vegetation and the foraging choices of the geese. In the same year, Nicole Feige (Oldenburg University) even learned the Dutch language to conduct questionnaires for the last chapter of this thesis. Finally, in 2004 and 2005, large amounts of work have been done by the students that joined the Community and Conservation ecology courses on Schiermonnikoog and Gotland. To all these people I want to say: thanks for the nice time in the field and for the great jobs you did and all the data that was collected by you, without all of you this thesis would have been only half the size it is now!

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